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ABSTRACT

This report contains detailed descriptions of three program recommendations regarding public school choice. The recommendations are a result of a study conducted by the New Jersey Department of Education, in which public school choice and magnet schools were examined. The three recommended programs described are (1) Intradistrict Choice Program; (2) Project Attain; and (3) Learning Incentives Program. These three programs are voluntary, 3-year pilots designed to encourage choice within a district, dropouts to return to school, and high school juniors and seniors to take courses in another high school or a college. A list of questions and answers is included. Appended is a program budget summary. (SI)

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PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: NEW OPTIONS FOR NEW JERSEY STUDENTS, PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

Thomas H. Kean, Governor

Saul Cooperman, Commissioner of Education

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May, 1989

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PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE:
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STUDENTS, PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Choice -- the opportunity for teachers to create distinctive programs from which parents can choose -- is a hotly debated topic in the forefront of national attention.

The term "choice" has many meanings. Some say it is a wide-open selection of schools without controls, while others view it as having careful guidelines or controls. In its widest dimension, choice encompasses both public and private sectors. But choice can be much more. It can represent a choice of schools within a district (intradistrict choice), a choice of schools across district lines (interdistrict choice) or it might target specific populations to encourage dropout re-entry or learning enrichment.

In his 1988 State of the State Address, New Jersey Governor Thomas H. Kean asked Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman to study public school choice, specifically excluding vouchers and tuition tax credits from the study. The resulting report, Public School Choice: National Trends and Initiatives (New Jersey Department of Education, December 1988), examines public school choice in places such as Minnesota, Massachusetts and New York. It also looks closely at magnet schools -- schools with a specific educational emphasis.

The study revealed that at least 23 states have either adopted or are considering some form of state planning for educational choice; and at least 40 states have some kind of choice programs at the district level.

This modern choice movement has produced many valid arguments to support and discourage the parental selection of schools. Proponents argue that choice promotes positive factors, specifically competition which invigorates school systems to improve their educational quality by expanding options. Detractors maintain that choice creates new problems, including excessive transportation costs and unwanted schools that few parents select.

New Jerseyans voiced their own opinions on choice at 21 county-based hearings sponsored by the Department of Education following the release of the report. These meetings, which attracted about 800 people, provided a framework for understanding the key issues in each county concerning the concept of choice.

The combined hearing testimony and research

reflected in the report built a solid base for the three recommendations regarding public school choice in New Jersey which follow: the Intradistrict Choice Program, Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program.

These three programs are voluntary, three-year pilots designed to encourage choice within a district, dropouts to return to school, and high school juniors and seniors to take courses in another high school or a college.

The Intradistrict Choice Program will fund at least six school districts to plan, implement and maintain a system of choice within each of these districts, which will be selected by the Department of Education through the competitive grant process. Choice may be offered through an array of neighborhood schools and magnets. Each district will receive up to $100,000 for planning in Fiscal Year 1990, and up to $200,000 for implementation and additional transportation costs in Fiscal Years 1991 and 1992, according to the number of schools to become magnets.

Project Attain will encourage dropouts to return to school by creating more options from which they can choose. Under existing state options, dropouts can re-enroll in their resident high school, a county vocational school, a New Jersey Urban Dropout/Youth Corps Program, a G.E.D. Program or an Adult High School. Project Attain adds new options for dropouts by allowing them to choose a public secondary school in another district, vocational school in another county, or a public/independent college or university. Dropouts will be referred by the Department of Education to one of New Jersey's 13 Youth Corps Centers, where they will meet with a counselor and consider all of these options.

The program will begin in Fiscal Year 1991, by funding 200 dropouts for re-enrollment in options under Project Attain. Up to 280 students may return through Project Attain in Fiscal Year 1992, and 400 students in Fiscal Year 1993. Non-resident public secondary schools and out-of-county vocational schools accepting students under Project Attain will receive the district estimated per pupil tuition cost, while public/independent colleges and universities accepting these students will receive the average community college tuition.

The Learning Incentives Program will allow up to 1,000 students in Fiscal Year 1991 to take up to the equivalent of two year-long courses outside their resident high school at other high schools, up to two courses per semester at public/independent colleges and

universities, or any combination of these up to the equivalent of two year-long courses. Courses completed under this program may be used for both high school and college credit. Based on the average community college tuition, secondary schools will receive $37 per credit per three-credit course or $111 per course. In addition to the $111 per course, an extra $50 will be available to defray student expenses for books and materials associated with college and university coursework.

The following pages contain detailed descriptions of each of these three programs.

INTRADISTRICT CHOICE -- CHOICE WITHIN A DISTRICT

Intradistrict choice allows parental selection of schools within a district comprised of either all magnet schools or a mixture of magnets and neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools draw their students from neighborhood attendance boundaries. Most neighborhood schools have used the traditional approach to schooling -- a structured curriculum composed of a series of academic courses each scheduled for a certain number of minutes for students with most responsibility for learning resting with teachers. Magnet schools are schools with a particular educational theme or methodological emphasis (e.g. health/science, fine arts, Montessori, etc.) that may or may not be limited for attendance by neighborhood boundaries. Choice in a system of one or more magnets and neighborhood schools creates opportunities for students that are not present in most existing school districts which are limited to enrollment by residential areas or attendance zones.

Intradistrict choice has the potential to plant seeds of excellence within individual school districts, and can be a way to improve the level of educational quality in a district. Demonstrably successful models in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Community District 4 in New York City, and many other communities, substantiate the validity of this approach.

Research (Public School Choice: National Trends and Initiatives, N.J. Department of Education, December, 1988, p. 32-34) has shown that intradistrict systems of choice can facilitate:

- increased student interest in school
- lower truancy and dropout rates
- increased parental involvement
- effective matches of students' interests and educational needs
- an environment for increased student achievement
- desegregation of a district
- redistribution of funds for more effective spending and
- teacher empowerment and creativity.

Intradistrict choice programs currently exist in New Jersey in only a few communities, most notably Montclair and Atlantic City. Educators and members of the public who testified at the public hearings were much more receptive to voluntary intradistrict choice approaches than to mandatory or interdistrict models.

A VOLUNTARY INTRADISTRICT CHOICE PROGRAM (ICP) WILL BE INITIATED IN NEW JERSEY ON A THREE-YEAR PILOT BASIS.

This pilot program should be evaluated yearly beginning in year two in order to provide data for further actions regarding intradistrict choice initiatives. At least six districts will each be awarded a grant on a competitive basis for the initiation of an intradistrict choice program.

TITLE: **INTRADISTRICT CHOICE PROGRAM (ICP)**
(Three-year Pilot)

PURPOSE: To facilitate the creation of parental choice systems within existing individual school districts.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

A. To provide opportunities for students to attend schools outside of attendance boundaries which may be based upon neighborhood or area of residence.

B. To expand the number of educational settings available to students by creating magnet schools and thereby providing a closer match of individual needs and the educational environment.

C. To improve student academic interest and performance.

D. To provide parents with the orientation, information and advisement necessary to make informed decisions about school selection.

E. To provide an opportunity for teachers to assume an expanded role in the creation of magnet school themes, curricula and program assessment tools.

F. To foster a sense of community and mutual collaboration in a school setting.

DISTRICT
PARTICIPATION: Voluntary

PROGRAM
DESCRIPTION: This program is designed to assist school districts in the creation of intradistrict systems of choice which emphasize selection of schools at any or all levels and the development of magnet schools. Districts may apply for funding under this program in accordance with the deadlines and procedures distributed with this program description.

GUIDELINES:

A. Development of a Choice System

1. Magnet schools may be established at the level(s) deemed appropriate by the local school district. Districts may wish to create a mix of magnet and neighborhood schools.

2. The content, instructional approaches and school organization of each magnet school should be designed by the teachers who will operate the program.

3. The Department of Education will provide technical assistance as requested by individual schools involved in this program.

4. Collaboration between the local district and a college or university or business and industry is encouraged where deemed appropriate by the district, but not required for funding under this program.

B. Choice Registration Process

1. Registration should begin at a specified time each year.

2. The process should allow time for parental school visits and orientation.

3. Parents may choose a school as

part of the choice registration process only:

a. at the time of initial implementation of a choice system in the district

b. when students are entering the school system

c. when students complete the highest level of education in a school

4. Parents do not have to choose a school:

a. at time of initiation of the choice system. Parents may elect to keep their child in the currently assigned school.

b. after the choice plan is implemented. Students already enrolled in a school need not reapply for enrollment each year. If a transfer is not requested, it will be assumed that the child will continue in the school of enrollment to ensure continuity.

5. Parents choosing a school during choice registration must select and rank-order a set number of schools (as determined locally) at the set time of registration. Parents are not guaranteed their first choice.

6. All students shall be provided access to all schools subject only to the following:

a. Space availability -- which will be defined locally by the administration and school board. Such policy should address school capacity, class size and facilities. Actual space available should be determined in advance of the choice registration process.

b. Existing desegregation plans

-- must be maintained. Movement of students must be in compliance with an existing desegregation plan.

c. Racial Balance -- to prevent segregation of schools. Final school enrollments should reflect the district's school-age population racial distribution +/- 10 percent to ensure equity in a choice system. If the minority population in a school is 10 percent or more above the district average, priority will be given to non-minority students; if it is 10 or more percent below the district average, priority will go to minority students.

d. Sibling preference -- to those children with a brother or sister in the selected school.

7. If there are more eligible students than spaces available after the parental selection criteria in these guidelines (B. 6. a to d) have been considered, one or all of the following may be used as further criteria:

a. Those students living closest to the school may be given priority, or

b. a lottery may be conducted among the eligible students to fill the available spaces.

8. If the first choice is not awarded, then the student may be placed in the second or third choice school, subject to these same guidelines and in accordance with local policy.

9. Districts may use a waiting list for those who do not receive their first choice.

10. In the event of parental failure or refusal to select a school, the district may assign the student.

11. It is expected that students will spend at least one year in the selected school-- subject to the local appeal process (B. 13)

12. Student transfer requests -- requests for movement of a student other than during the choice registration process -- will be handled by a locally designated school administrator, who will discuss the request with both the parent/guardian and student.

a. Student placement in a school selected by a transfer request is subject to the same guidelines as stated in B. 6 and must be compatible with the student's interests and needs.

b. If the final decision of the locally designated school administrator is not acceptable to the parent/guardian, see B. 13.

13. The parent/guardian should have the right to appeal student placements or transfer denials before a locally-appointed committee comprised of a parent(s), teacher(s), administrator(s). Final decisions on appeals rest with the district school board.

14. Educationally Handicapped Students: Choice applies to educationally handicapped students in the same manner as to other students but must be handled within the context of existing regulations and the student's Individualized Educational Program (I.E.P.). Choice will be offered within the framework of both the I.E.P. and the informed consent of parents as well as the ability of the selected school to deliver a program suited

to the needs of the student as described in the pupil's I.E.P.

15. Bilingual/ESL students: Choice applies to Bilingual and ESL students in the same manner as to other students but must be handled within the context of existing regulations and procedures. Student needs will be met, and choices honored, within the framework of local school facilities, staffing and resources.

C. Parent Information Center

1. Districts participating in this program will each develop a Parent Information Center in order to serve as a liaison between the schools and the community. The Center will be staffed by parents, either full- or part-time.

2. Functions of the Parent Information Center should include but not be limited to the following:

a. Coordination of advisement and orientation for parents regarding the implementation of choice in the district.

b. Coordination of the publication of locally developed descriptive materials detailing the choice registration process, characteristics and themes of each particular school, and where to go or call for help.

c. Development of a resource directory of community advisors to help non-English-speaking parents in the district understand these materials.

d. Assistance for parents during the school registration process (e.g. provide information and arrange school tours).

e. Development of special outreach efforts to the community (e.g. parents who do not choose a school).

e. The Parent Information Center shall act as part of the program's administrative unit (section D) subject to local regulations and guidelines developed by the district administration and school board.

D. Program Administration

1. Administration of this process should be designed locally in a manner to provide for coordination of choice registration and related activities. Districts should determine if administrators will be full- or part-time.

a. A program director is recommended to oversee the operation of the program and to facilitate curricular development of school programs.

b. A student assignment administrator could handle student placement according to choices and/or could work with the Parent Information Center.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

May 1989	Proposed three-year pilot project guidelines refined.
June to August 1989	State Department of Education development of Request for Proposals (RFP) and distribution to school districts.

September to December 1989	District consideration and development of program proposals.
December 30, 1989	Deadline for district proposals
January to March 1990	State Department of Education review of proposals and awards to selected school districts.
March 1990	Implementation of three-year pilot programs to selected districts. Each district will receive yearly funding to be used in accordance with project guidelines. The overall sequence of planning and implementation in each district should be as follows:
March 1990 to March 1991	Planning for Implementation
April 1991	Choice registration for fall 1991
September 1991	Implementation of magnet schools and related project activities.
September 1991 to June 1993	Refinement and adjustment of choice system. Ongoing evaluation of impact of program implementation. An evaluation of this program will be conducted by the local district and coordinated by the state.

PROPOSED
BUDGET:

A state DOE competitive grant program of $600,000 will be sought through a budget resolution (F.Y. 1990) for at least six districts to plan for implementation of Intradistrict Choice. Grants to defray the costs of implementation and maintenance of themes, equipment directly related to themes, parent information, parent and teacher training and transporation in these school districts under the Intradistrict Choice Program will be awarded in F.Y. 1991 and 1992. These grants will be divided as follows:

Year	Grant	Purpose
Year 1 (F.Y. 90)	$600,000	Planning
Year 2 (F.Y. 91)	$1.2 million	Implementation of themes, parent information, teacher training and transportation
Year 3 (F.Y. 92)	$1.2 million	Maintenance of themes, parent information, teacher training and transportation

These grants are to be awarded to at least six districts per year in this manner:

Year	Magnet Schools* to be developed	Grant Amount (up to)
Year 1	1 school	$ 50,000
	2 schools	$ 75,000
	3 or more	$100,000

Year	Magnet Schools* to be developed	Grant Amount (up to)
Year 2	1 school	$150,000
	2 schools	$175,000
	3 or more	$200,000
Year 3	1 school	$150,000
	2 schools	$175,000
	3 or more	$200,000

* The traditional approach to schooling, as described on page 4 of this document, may be part of a choice system; but schools with this type of methodological approach are not eligible for funding under this program. Districts are eligible for funding according to the number of schools to be redesigned to emphasize particular educational themes or methological approaches through significant changes in existing school teaching and learning environments.

Department of Education administrative costs are estimated at $ 55,950. These costs are not included in the grant appropriation.

PROJECT ATTAIN -- SCHOOL DROPOUTS

The statewide dropout rate in New Jersey is 16.1 percent, and much higher in urban areas. A choice program specifically aimed at giving high school dropouts more choices for a second chance at completing their high school education could prove very beneficial to the students themselves and to society.

Such an initiative will be placed within the context of current departmental and district programs for dropouts which include re-enrollment in the resident high school, a county vocational school, a New Jersey Urban Dropout/Youth Corps Program, a G.E.D. Program, or an Adult High School. The purpose of Project Attain is to expand opportunities for dropouts to successfully complete their diploma requirements in an alternate setting. New options under this program include public secondary schools in another district (including other high schools, alternative schools, or vocational schools), public vocational schools in another county, or public/independent colleges and universities.

A VOLUNTARY PROGRAM CALLED "PROJECT ATTAIN" WILL BE CREATED AS A GRANT INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE MORE EDUCATIONAL CHOICE FOR HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS.

TITLE: **PROJECT ATTAIN**
(Three-year Pilot)

PURPOSE: To provide school dropouts with more options from which to choose for a second chance to complete their high school education. The program will thereby open up more alternative settings in addition to the one from which the student originally dropped out and others currently existing in the state.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

A. To facilitate the re-enrollment of school dropouts into an appropriate public educational setting.

B. To assist dropouts in finding the best available setting for student re-entry to education.

DISTRICT/
POST-SECONDARY
PARTICIPATION: Voluntary

GUIDELINES: A. Pupil Eligibility

1. Any student who is between the ages of 16 and 19 and who has been off the rolls of the resident district for at least six months is eligible to participate.

2. Dropouts under 18 require the approval of a parent/legal guardian for participation in this program. Parental approval should be indicated on the Department of Education Dropout Re-Entry Form.

3. Dropout status must be verified by a certificate of non-enrollment, which may be obtained through the resident district.

4. Students classified as Educationally Handicapped (N.J.A.C. 6:28) are eligible for this program. Participating schools accepting educationally handicapped students must be able to deliver the Individualized Education Plan prescribed by the resident district Child Study Team for these students. The resident district is responsible for assuring that all Child Study Team evaluations and I.E.P.'s are up to date. Schools accepting educationally handicapped students may re-evaluate these students after six months with the approval of the pupil's parents and the resident district.

5. Bilingual/ESL students are eligible for this program but must be considered within the context of existing regulations and procedures.

B. Participating Institutions

1. Schools that are eligible to participate in this pilot program are public secondary schools, public

county vocational schools and public/independent colleges and universities.

2. Post-secondary programs for dropouts to be used under Project Attain must be state-approved.

3. Transportation

a. Participating non-resident secondary institutions are responsible for providing transportation for participating students to the non-resident secondary school. Participating districts transporting students under Project Attain may claim these students for state transportation aid.

b. Students attending paricipating post-secondary institutions under this program are responsible for their own transportation.

C. Outreach for Dropout Participation

1. The Department of Education will publicize the availability of a Dropout Hotline to be used specifically for dropout advisement.

2. The Department of Education will collectively work with participating schools to develop and distribute written materials to increase public awareness of Project Attain and the options available through it.

3. Students interested in participating in Project Attain will be referred to one of New Jersey's 13 Youth Corps Centers (jointly operated by the state Department of Education Division of Adult Education and the Department of Community Affairs). Youth Corps Centers will act as central liaisons for dropouts, participating schools, and the Department of Education for Project Attain.

D. Student Placement

1. Participation in this program does not guarantee placement in an educational setting.

2. Participating schools may determine acceptance based on space availability, an examination of student records, a personal interview with the prospective student, and compatibility with an existing desegregation plan.

3. Participating schools cannot discriminate against students on the basis of race, gender, language ability, socioeconomic status or educational handicap.

4. Students in this program must meet all local and state mandates and graduation requirements to receive a high school diploma.

5. Participating schools may dismiss students under Project Attain in accordance with normal school disciplinary and academic regulations. The school will notify the Youth Corps Center it has been working with and the N.J. Department of Education of such an action.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

Spring 1989	Refinement of Program Guidelines.
Fall 1989	Development of materials to attract institutions (section B) to participate.
January to February 1990	Distribution of materials to attract institutions to participate with form to be signed by those interested and returned to DOE.
March 1990	Deadline for DOE forms from interested institutions. Development of list of participating

	institutions and Dropout Re-Entry Forms.
April 1990	Distribution of list of participating institutions and Dropout Re-Entry Forms to Youth Corps Centers and all high school guidance counselors. Program availability and information publicized statewide.
May to August 1990	Dropout Re-Entry Forms accepted, processed and student placements made
September 1990	Implementation -- students enter schools.

PROPOSED BUDGET:

A state DOE grant of $1.27 million will be established for F.Y. 1991 to cover the costs of education in schools accepting students under this program (Budget is calculated using the current 1988-89 per-resident pupil expenses.) Grants to continue this program for F.Y. 1992 and 1993 should be appropriated accordingly and divided in this manner:

Year	**Grant Amount***	**$/Allocation**	**Number of Students**
Year 1	$1.27 million	$6331	500 (up to 200 funded through this program)
Year 2	$1.95 million	$6964	700 (up to 280 funded through this program -- 200 - 20 non-retention** = 180 continuing plus 100 added)

Year	Grant Amount*	$/Allocation	Number of Students
Year 3	$3.06 million	$7660	1,000 (up to 400 funded through this program -- 280 - 28 non-retention)** = 252 continuing plus 148 added)

* These are the maximum grant amounts, but it is estimated that this program will cost considerably less. By making dropouts aware of their opportunities, it will attract many to re-enroll in their own district or in other alternatives not funded under this program.

** Based on 10 percent participating students not returning to the program the next year.

Department of Education administrative costs are estimated to be $ 9,080. These costs are not part of the grant appropriation.

LEARNING INCENTIVES PROGRAM -- SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY

The Learning Incentives Program is designed to provide greater educational options for 11th- and 12th-grade students who desire additional intellectual challenges by allowing them to take courses outside their resident district at either participating public secondary institutions or public/independent colleges or universities for both high school and college credit.

Participating students may take up to the equivalent of two year-long courses outside their resident high school, up to two courses per semester at public/independent colleges or universities, or any combination of these up to the equivalent of two year-long courses.

A LEARNING INCENTIVES PROGRAM WILL BE ESTABLISHED AS A VOLUNTARY GRANT PROGRAM IN NEW JERSEY.

TITLE: **LEARNING INCENTIVES PROGRAM**
(Three-year Pilot)

PURPOSE: To provide for and facilitate the enrollment of high school juniors and seniors in courses outside their resident districts in other high schools or colleges and universities for both high school and college credit.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

A. To provide for a greater variety of educational options for eligible public school students.

B. To offer intellectually stimulating experiences for eligible students.

C. To facilitate the use by secondary students of the specializations, technology and depth of knowledge available at public secondary and public/independent colleges and universities.

D. To provide students with an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills by attending other public secondary institutions or public/independent colleges and universities.

DISTRICT/COLLEGE
PARTICIPATION: Voluntary

GUIDELINES: A. Pupil Eligibility

1. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade students enrolled in public secondary schools are eligible for this program.

2. Students may participate in this program by taking up to the equivalent of two year-long courses at a public secondary institution outside their district, two courses per semester at public/independent college or university, or any combination of these up to the equivalent of two year-long courses.

3. Students may enroll in any official session, including summer, of the participating institutions.

4. Students classified as Educationally Handicapped (NJAC 6:28) are eligible for this program in the same manner as other students but must be handled within the context of existing regulations and the student's Individualized Educational Program (I.E.P.). Choices will be available within the framework of both the I.E.P. and the informed consent of parents as well as the ability of the selected school to deliver a course(s) suited to the needs of the student as described in the pupil's I.E.P.

5. Bilingual/ESL students are eligible in the same manner as other students but must be handled within the context of existing regulations and procedures.

B. Participating Institutions

1. Institutions that are eligible to participate in this pilot program are all New Jersey public secondary

schools and public/independent two- and four-year colleges and universities.

2. Participating institutions will determine which courses may be used for this program.

3. Participating institutions must provide students with a comprehensive list of course offerings yearly before high school scheduling begins.

4. Participating institutions may require students to meet appropriate standard academic prerequisites for admission into courses. Such prerequisites will be determined by the individual institutions, subject to existing state regulations and guidelines.

5. Transportation: Students attending participating institutions under this program are responsible for their own transportation; but participating districts that provide transportation for students participating in this program may claim these students for state transportation aid.

6. Students may not audit courses under this program. All courses must be taken for credit and students must meet all requirements set by the instructor.

7. The Department of Education will work with colleges and universities and local school districts to meet teacher certification requirements. The Department of Education will actively explore all available means for assisting program participants to meet requirements in those situations where certification may be necessary.

C. Student Placement

1. Participating colleges and universities will allow students to

enroll in courses offered.

2. Colleges and universities will provide the appropriate support services for these students (e.g. use of computer labs, tutorial services.)

3. Participating public secondary schools may accept students on a space available basis.

4. Participating public secondary institutions and public/independent colleges and universities cannot discriminate against students on the basis of race, gender, language ability, socioeconomic status or educational handicap.

D. Post-secondary Course Completion

1. Students who successfully complete post-secondary courses under this program will be awarded both secondary and post-secondary (dual) credit.

2. If a student attends the same public/independent college or university after high school graduation, that post-secondary institution must accept the student's credits acquired under this program. That college/university may not refuse to grant credit and may not charge students for the award of this credit subject to regulations in effect at the time of the student's enrollment.

3. Students must meet the local resident district and state mandates for graduation.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

May to August 1989	Refinement of Program Guidelines and development of program

	information and brochures to encourage secondary and post-secondary participation.
September 1989	Distribution of program information and brochures to all secondary school districts and public/independent colleges and universities with participation form to be signed by those interested and returned to DOE.
October 31, 1989	Deadline for participation forms from institutions wishing to participate.
November 1989	Development of list of participating institutions and Learning Incentives Program Applications for students and program publicity.
December 1989	Distribution of list of participating institutions and Learning Incentives Program Applications to all participating institutions.
March 1990	DOE begins to accept L.I.P. applications for placement.
June 1, 1990	Deadline for L.I.P. applications.
September 1990	Implementation -- students begin taking courses.

PROPOSED BUDGET:

A DOE grant of $322,000 will be established for F.Y. 1991 to cover the cost of educating students participating in this program. This grant shall be reallocated for F.Y. 1992 and 1993 and divided in this manner:

Tuition	Secondary/Post-Secondary:
	$111/course per semester (Based on three-credit course pro-rated accordingly)
	(derived from public community college average tuition -- $37/credit x three credits = $111 per course per student)

Books and Materials	Secondary: $0 Books and materials are already funded from secondary operating budgets Post-secondary: up to $50 per student per course

For budgetary purposes, funding is based on the planning assumption that 1,000 students will each take two college courses a year under this program, e.g. ($111 tuition + $50 books) x 2 courses = $322 per student.

Year	Grant up to	Students
Year 1	$322,000	1,000
Year 2	$322,000	1,000
Year 3	$322,000	1,000
TOTAL PROGRAM	$966,000	

Department of Education Administrative Costs are estimated to be $ 9,080. These costs are not part of the grant appropriation.

PROGRAM BUDGET SUMMARY:

The total cost of these three public school choice initatives for F.Y. 90 is:

Intradistrict Choice Program	**$ 600,000**
Project Attain	**$ 0**
Learning Incentives	**$ 0**
TOTAL	**$ 600,000**

The total cost of these three programs for F.Y. 91 is:

Intradistrict Choice Program	**$ 1.2 million**
Project Attain	**$ 1.27 million**
Learning Incentives Program	**$ 322,000**
TOTAL	**$ 2.792 million**

The total cost of these three programs for F.Y. 92 is:

Intradistrict Choice Program	**$ 1.2 million**
Project Attain	**$ 1.95 million**
Learning Incentives Program	**$ 322,000**
TOTAL	**$ 3.472 million**

The total cost of these three programs for F.Y. 93 is:

Intradistrict Choice Program	**$ 0**
Project Attain	**$ 3.06 million**
Learning Incentives Program	**$ 322,000**
TOTAL	**$ 3.382 million**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Q. **Why isn't a statewide system of choice across district lines being recommended?**

   A. The possible implementation of a statewide system of interdistrict public school choice was carefully considered; but this type of initiative is not being recommended in this report because New Jersey has many unique characteristics that would inhibit a system of statewide choice at this time.

   The state's density of population is chief among these reasons. Choice among districts could result in the movement of large numbers of students, which might impair local district budgets. Planning would be difficult and voter approval hard to achieve with uncertain student enrollments.

   Transportation costs can be very high in systems that allow choice across district lines. These costs could drain local budgets and impede more needed uses of these funds.

   The existing wide differences in per pupil expenditures among districts make it almost impossible to operate an equitable system of choice across district lines.

   Finally, the widespread public fear of the impact of choice across district lines was quite apparent in the public hearings, conveying that many New Jerseyans are not amenable to the idea at this time.

   The Department of Education will continue to consider the future feasibility and use of statewide interdistrict choice by closely monitoring New Jersey's choice activities and those of other states.

2. Q. **Why are the Intradistrict Choice Program, Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program being recommended?**

   A. A growing body of literature and experience

supports the use of choice in these three initiatives.

Intradistrict choice -- parental selection of schools within the boundaries of a local school district -- is successfully practiced in many districts including Prince George's County, Maryland, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Community District Four in New York City. Results have shown improvements in parental involvement, effective matches of student interests and learning styles with different schools, and an expanded role for teachers as academic leaders in the design, implementation and evaluation of magnet school themes and curricula.

Project Attain is based on successful models pioneered in Minnesota and elsewhere. It provides dropouts with more opportunities for a second chance in a new setting to complete their high school education.

The Learning Incentives Program is similar to the post-secondary initiatives of at least 17 other states. It permits a student to take courses outside the resident district at another high school or at a public/independent college or university for both high school and college credit.

3. Q. **Although statewide choice across district lines is not recommended, aren't Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program two interdistrict programs?**

A. Students participating in Project Attain will be certified dropouts with a certificate of non-enrollment. Dropout status means that these students are no longer attached to a district. This program provides them with more opportunities for a fresh start in a new school which may be more compatible with their needs.

Students participating in Learning Incentives are still attached to their resident district for the majority of their classes. They only may take up to the equivalent of two year-long courses in another high school, two courses per semester in a public/independent college or university, or any combination of these up to the equivalent of two year-long courses.

These programs are designed to widen educational opportunities by providing students with more alternatives to the resident secondary school experience.

4. Q. **Can districts refuse to participate in these programs?**

   A. Yes. All three choice initiatives are voluntary. Districts may apply to participate in one or more choice programs. (Note: When a district decides to participate in the Learning Incentives Program, it agrees to allow its own students out and non-resident students in.

5. Q. **Under the present education system, can't districts become intradistrict choice systems already?**

   A. Yes. But the Intradistrict Choice Program is a state initiative designed to encourage districts to do so.

6. Q. **How does the Intradistrict Choice Program affect teachers?**

   A. In those districts selected for the pilot program, the content, instructional approaches and school organization of each magnet school should be designed by the teachers who will operate the program. Programmatic grant funds may be used to defray the costs associated with these activities. Teachers will be provided with planning time to perform these activities according to locally established guidelines for choice.

7. Q. **What is a magnet school?**

   A. A magnet school is a school based on a certain educational or methodological approach, e.g. a fine arts school, a school for international studies or a Montessori school. Classes in these schools would be consistent with their school themes or educational approaches, while continuing to meet local and state curriculum standards.

Magnets originated as a method of desegregation without mandatory busing. Magnets in a choice system, however, are not limited to desegregation purposes. These schools provide options through different themes and methodological approaches, and their school populations may or may not be limited by attendance boundaries.

8. Q. **Won't these three choice initiatives cause resegregation of schools?**

A. No. Programs have safeguards built into the guidelines to prevent segregation.

Movement of students in the Intradistrict Choice Program is limited so that each school in a district will reflect the racial distribution of the district's school-age population within a 10 percent range.

Students may be accepted into schools through Project Attain as long as their acceptance does not conflict with existing desegregation plans.

Students participating in the Learning Incentives Program will take up to the equivalent of two year-long courses outside their resident high school; therefore, students under this program will participate on a part-time basis and will not upset any existing desegregation plans.

9. Q. **How are magnet schools used in intradistrict choice?**

A. A district can implement a system of intradistrict choice by redesigning all schools buildings as magnets, dividing larger school buidings into smaller schools, or mixing some magnets and neighborhood schools. This is a local decision which should be based on the interests and needs of the community.

10. Q. **Is there a limit to how often a parent can exercise the choice option in Intradistrict Choice?**

A. Yes. Parents may choose a school only at the time of initial implementation of the choice

system in the district, when the child enters the school system, and when the child completes the highest level of education in a school. Once a parent chooses a school, the child is expected to stay in that school at least one year or until the highest level of education is completed in that school. This is subject to the locally designed appeal process.

11. Q. **How often can students use the choice option in Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program?**

A. Students re-entering the system under Project Attain are expected to complete their education in the school selected. Students participating in the Learning Incentives Program may choose up to the equivalent of two year-long courses in a public high school outside their resident district or in a public/independent college or university.

12. Q. **Why has the Department of Education limited these programs to public schools only?**

A. In his 1988 State of the State Address, Governor Thomas H. Kean asked Education Commissioner Saul Cooperman to study public school choice. The governor specifically excluded tuition tax credits and vouchers as possible choice systems in New Jersey. Therefore, the proposed choice programs are limited to public schools; they are intended to open up opportunities in the public sector in keeping with the governor's directive on choice. Also, there are constitutional issues regarding the separation of church and state involved in any choice program which would likely preclude private schools from participating.

13. Q. **If private schools are excluded from intradistrict choice, why are independent colleges included in Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program?**

A. Sixteen independent colleges in New Jersey are recognized by state law as having a public mission (Independent College and University Assistance Act NJSA 18A:72B). Independent

colleges receive state aid under state statute and are eligible for state programmatic grants. A member of the Independent College Association also sits as a member of the State Board of Higher Education and students attending these schools are eligible for state financial aid.

14. Q. **Are private school students eligible to participate in these programs?**

A. No. These programs were designed for students enrolled in public schools only.

15. Q. **Why are participating institutions in Learning Incentives receiving funds for students based on established rates when district per pupil expenditures and post-secondary tuitions vary?**

A. Students will be accepted on a space available basis into schools with existing personnel and facilities. This flat rate tuition -- $111 per student per secondary course and $161 per student per college or university course in Learning Incentives -- will provide an incentive for institutions to accept students under these programs.

16. Q. **Why will secondary institutions accepting students under Project Attain receive the district estimated per pupil tuition cost when secondary institutions and colleges under the Learning Incentives Program will receive only $111 or $161 respectively per student per course?**

A. Under Project Attain, students will attend a non-resident district or college full-time; therefore, these institutions must support the total cost of education for these students. Non-resident secondary and vocational schools will receive the district estimated per pupil tuition cost because district per pupil expenditures vary. Colleges and universities accepting students under Project Attain will receive the average community college tuition for these students.

Secondary schools or colleges and universitites accepting students under Learning Incentives will receive $111 or $161

per student per course respectively because these students will remain in their resident district for most of their schooling, only attending school in other districts or colleges for up to the equivalent of two year-long courses.

17. Q. **Why are colleges and universities receiving more money per student than secondary schools participating in the Learning Incentives Program?**

A. The extra up to $50 per student per course is to help defray the cost of books and materials, which are normally purchased by the students for college or university coursework.

18. Q. **What if Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program generate more student applications than projected?**

A. These programs were designed as three-year pilots. They are not intended to meet the needs of all students at this time. The number of students must be limited for funding purposes because funds are allocated on a per pupil basis.

19. Q. **Won't the Intradistrict Choice Program skim off the top students in schools?**

A. No. Because there are no academic standards to be met for entry into magnet schools, they will be accessible to all students.

20. Q. **How are you funding these programs?**

A. The state DOE has established a grant program for each of these programs with the funds to be obtained by a line item in the DOE budget. These are three-year pilot programs to gauge interest and success.

The Intradistrict Choice Program will be funded by a competitive grant to be divided among at least six districts selected by the state Department of Education.

Schools participating in Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program will receive

Schools participating in Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program will receive funds from the Department of Education based on predetermined per pupil allocations as described in their respective program budgets.

21. Q. **Can school districts claim non-resident students funded under Project Attain and the Learning Incentives Program for state aid?**

A. No. These programs provide state funds for students attending schools in districts other than their home districts. The state is not "double funding" students in these programs.

22. Q. **How will these programs be evaluated?**

A. On-going evaluation procedures will be built into each program starting in year two of each program. The process of evaluation will be conducted by the local district and coordinated by the state Department of Education. By the end of the three-year pilot period, recommendations regarding the continuance or non-continuance of the three programs will be developed by the state Department of Education. At that time, it may be determined that the programs should become more permanent with the addition of state regulations and/or legislation.